

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

# MAKING A VISIBLE DIFFERENCE

## NORTH BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA



### ABOUT THE COMMUNITY

North Birmingham is located within the City of Birmingham in Jefferson County, Alabama. The community is further subdivided into seven neighborhoods: Acipco-Finley, Collegeville, Fairmont, Harriman Park, Hooper City, North Birmingham and Pratt City.



These neighborhoods are located in portions of the Village Creek and Five-Mile Creek watersheds. Most of the neighborhoods within North Birmingham originated as a series of company-built camps for industrial workers during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The small camps were clustered adjacent to the respective industries they supported and provided housing, educational opportunities and services to workers in the factories. Today, North Birmingham is environmentally overburdened due to both legacy pollution and continuing heavy industrial activity. Residents have articulated concerns about air quality, flooding, emergency egress, contaminated sites and industry compliance with environmental laws, among others.

### EPA ACTIVITIES

EPA has taken a coordinated approach to evaluate the environmental condition and potential environmental hazards in low-income and minority communities of North Birmingham, including the neighborhoods of North Birmingham, Fairmont, Collegeville and Harriman Park, as well as portions of Five-Mile Creek and the Harriman Park ditch. This effort, which includes air, water and waste issues, is known as the North Birmingham Environmental Collaboration Project.

EPA's air program has deployed air monitors near industrial sites adjacent to these neighborhoods, and is supporting community participation in community air sensor training. EPA has also worked to facilitate discussions between the North Birmingham Community Coalition and the Local Emergency Planning Committee concerning emergency egress issues in the community.

EPA water engineers are in the process of customizing two planning tools, the National Stormwater Calculator and EnviroAtlas, to assist the City of Birmingham and Jefferson County in addressing flooding and polluted stormwater.

EPA's cleanup of the 35th Avenue Superfund Site is ongoing. EPA has sampled over 1,100 of the approximately 2,000 residential properties within the study area in North Birmingham. Based on the level and type of contamination found and other property-specific factors, cleanup activities have been implemented in a phased approach. During Phases I and II, EPA completed cleanup on approximately 84 properties. EPA is working on

Phase III removal activities at about 33 properties.

EPA is overseeing the excavation of lead-contaminated soil from over 50 properties, and are renewing efforts to complete soil sampling at the remaining 843 properties within the Site.





Lastly, the EPA is conducting facility inspections and addressing compliance issues at several industrial facilities which are regulated under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, the Clean Water Act and the Clean Air Act.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

EPA helped facilitate the formation of the Northern Birmingham Community Coalition to plan for the future. The Coalition includes neighborhood representatives as well as business, faith, and community leaders and government agencies. The communities of North Birmingham face many economic, environmental and social challenges. The Coalition seeks to bring together residents, community representatives and government agencies to address issues of environmental cleanup, enforcement and community investment. The EPA will work to forge a shared vision and action plan to create positive community change.



## INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

EPA and a multitude of local, state and other federal partners are building capacity in the community and the City of Birmingham by providing training and technical assistance, and holding and/or participating in community meetings.

For example, the City of Birmingham is developing a comprehensive watershed plan for the Village Creek Watershed. The City is also looking for ways to incorporate green infrastructure throughout the watershed as a way of addressing flooding and polluted stormwater. Cost data provided by the City of Birmingham is being entered into EPA National Stormwater Calculator to allow the city to quickly estimate the costs and

benefits of green versus gray infrastructure practices. Further, remote sensing data collected by Jefferson County is being used to add a Birmingham community component to EPA's EnviroAtlas. The City will use the results of the EnviroAtlas analysis in their green infrastructure planning processes to gain a better understanding of how its decisions can affect ecological and human health outcomes.

## ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND SUSTAINABILITY

EPA Regional Administrator Heather McTeer Toney convened the Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice (EJ IWG), to bring federal support to address the myriad of needs in North Birmingham and the larger City of Birmingham.

The EJ IWG builds on existing investments and brings new resources to the community, including technical as-



sistance. Participating local agencies include: the City of Birmingham, the Jefferson County Department of Health, the North Birmingham Community Coalition, Alabama Department of Environmental Management, and Alabama Department of Transportation. Federal partners include: Department of Agriculture, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Commerce, Department of Education, Department of Energy, Department of Interior, Department of Justice, Department of Labor, Department of Transportation, Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Additionally, EPA has entered into Memorandums of Understanding with local colleges to leverage or share resources.

Since the formation of the IWG, small working groups meet regularly to further define priority projects, performance measures, long term and short term goals, and identify key stakeholders to engage to achieve milestones.

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